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THE ANTI-POLITICS MACHINE REVISITED
THE ACCOMMODATION OF POWER AND THE DEPOLITICIZATION OF DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF IN RURAL INDIA

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"The Indian political system is like an iceberg, only a small portion of it is showing itself out, while a huge portion which is completely hidden supports it."

- K. Seshadri, 1976: 217

The Anti-Politics Machine Revisited

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Bhubaneswar—the capital city of the eastern Indian state of Orissa—is one of India's more pleasant capital cities. The roads are wide, the people are friendly, it sports the usual range of accommodations from 5-star international hotels to my modest but comfortable £2/night adobe, it is known for its stunning temples, and it hosts Asia's largest jewellery showroom and a quite adequate social infrastructure catered to those able to shop there. Indeed, even a short stay in the capital could make one forget easily that Orissa is one of India's poorest states.

The pastel-pink state legislature building—where I had spent so much time waiting on my appointments—is a scene of bustling activity. People—mostly men—hurry in and out of doors carrying stacks of paper (perhaps, I speculate, valuable statistics have just been gathered or a new welfare scheme has just been announced). Ten workers tirelessly plough through piles of aging paper at a desk designed for no more than four. Ministers, directors, and commissioners are happy to accommodate this friend from London and eager to discuss at length all the valuable rural development schemes they have been genuinely pleased to implement from their Bhubaneswar offices. At least twelve government departments are operating schemes to assist Western Orissa's development. Indeed, if "development" is correlated at all to government activity, then the state legislature building is the very oasis from which development must be flowing. And, the common theme to what I was told is that things are improving for Western Orissa—the proof was in the plans.

I suspected that I might find a different story on the ground, however. So a night train later, I found myself in Rayagada Town, the district headquarters of Rayagada District. Generally, Rayagada is also a pleasant town—clean and straight streets, freshly-

painted buildings, a few internet cafés, a seemingly out-of-place international-standards hotel, and slums that are conveniently removed from the town's nicer environs. I spent an afternoon with the both famous and infamous District Collector, listening to his frustration with and eagerness to confront the "informal power structures" that complicate the government's development and relief plans. Officially the pre-eminent authority within the district, the Collector often has trouble exercising control over even his subordinates.

A different script of power needed to be explained, and the closer I travelled to Kashipur Block, the more apparent that script became. And so, holed up in the old government inspection bungalow in Kashipur Town, is where the story became most clear.

My experience in Kashipur helped me to reconsider much of the development literature that had seemed somewhat unfulfilling during my studies. It allowed me to test what I thought I knew about the politics of development against the "reality on the ground." There are many elements to the story of Kashipur's politics, however, and it is impossible to cover them all here given the word limitations of this essay. I am confident, however, that my selectivity has represented adequately the central matter for illustrating the local politics of this community. I am deeply indebted to many people who facilitated the field-research necessary to produce this dissertation from December 2001 to January 2002. Among the most integral to my studies were Ruben Banerjee, Bishnu Sethi, Mohan Sahu, and D.N. Mishra. Several others have asked to remain anonymous, and many more have contributed in less extensive (but no less significant or appreciated) ways. This dissertation is dedicated to the scheduled caste and tribal communities of rural India…may a day come when our help will be truly helpful.
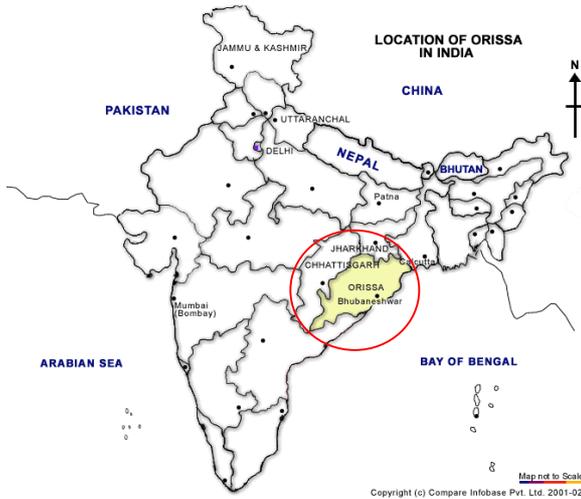
Figure 1: Location of Orissa State in India
Source: Maps of India (2002)

Orissa State:

POPULATION: 31,659,736
    SCHEDULED CASTE: 16.20%
    SCHEDULED TRIBE: 22.21%

LITERACY RATE: 49.09%   ...SCHED. TRIBE
    MALE: 63.09%   34.44%
    FEMALE: 34.68%   10.21%

VILLAGES: 51,057 IN 30 DISTRICTS

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, 1999
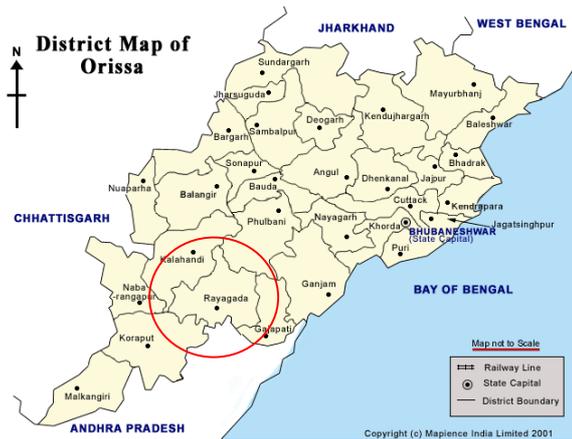
Figure 2: Location of Rayagada District in Orissa State
Source: Maps of India (2002)

Rayagada District:

POPULATION: 713,984
    SCHEDULED CASTE: 14.28%
    SCHEDULED TRIBE: 56.04%

HOUSEHOLDS: 143,398

BELOW POVERTY LINE: 136,253

LITERACY RATE: 26.01%   ...SCHED. TRIBE
    MALE: 36.53%   17.73%
    FEMALE: 15.63%   3.40%

VILLAGES: 2,667 IN 11 BLOCKS

Source: District Statistical Office, 1997
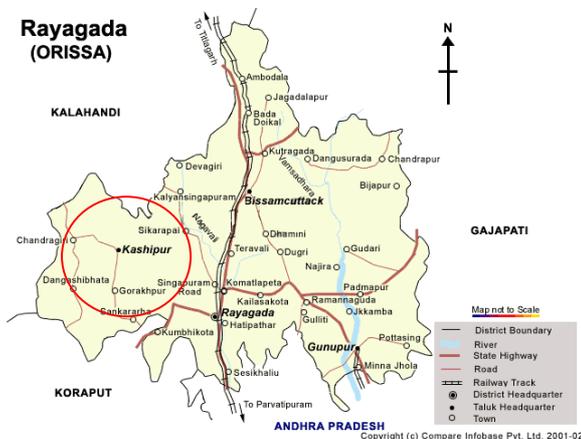
Figure 3: Location of Kashipur Block in Rayagada
Source: Maps of India (2002)

Kashipur Block:

POPULATION: 102,083
    SCHEDULED CASTE: 19.94%
    SCHEDULED TRIBE: 61.51%

HOUSEHOLDS: 31,321

BELOW POVERTY LINE: 24,482

LITERACY RATE: 13.20%   ...SCHED. TRIBE
    MALE: 22.04%   12.13%
    FEMALE: 4.47%   1.13%

VILLAGES: 414

Source: District Statistical Office, 1997

List of Abbreviations

BDO   Block Development Officer
DFID   Department for International Development (UK)
FAO   Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN)
IFAD   International Fund for Agricultural Development (UN)
OTDP   Orissa Tribal Development Project
NGO   Non-governmental organisation
UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund (UN)
WFP   World Food Programme (UN)
WHO   World Health Organisation (UN)

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Two Notes on Usage

1.   In this dissertation I refer to Kashipur's residents variously as "scheduled tribes," "scheduled castes," and "tribals." The first two terms are the legal names given to two of the most marginalized groups of India's social hierarchy. Whereas "scheduled castes" (also known as "untouchables" and "harijans") are sometimes included at the bottom of the Hindu caste hierarchy, "scheduled tribes" (also known as "adivasi" and "tribals") are more difficult to place conceptually (some writing struggles to identify them as Hindu or animist, within or outside the caste structure), but their socio-economic position within Indian society is generally lower than "scheduled castes." I refer to this group as "tribals"—a term used since 1931 and prevalent within Indian social science jargon. Additionally, it is important to note that tribals are hardly a "community" except in the broad sense of their shared marginalization relative to other social groups—there are many social/caste divisions within this group that reflect and determine differential access to power and resources.

2.   The term "development planning" has two meanings: firstly, it is the action of formulating development interventions, and secondly, it is a term used to explain a conceptual approach to public policy that supposedly was supplanted by more enlightened "development management" (Beal, 2001). This paper applies the term (and its derivatives) in reference to its first usage.

The Anti-Politics Machine Revisited

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Part 1: Introduction

Revisiting the Anti-Politics Machine

"Instead, it is a case of studying power at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices. What is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there—that is to say—where it installs itself and produces its real effects."

- Michel Foucault, 1976: 97

During the summer of 2001 the alarm bells sounded again throughout the Indian development and relief industries—starvation had been reported in a notoriously food insecure district of the eastern Indian state of Orissa. Soon, Kashipur Block—a predominately scheduled tribe and caste administrative unit of 414 villages—was catapulted into the public spotlight and was flooded with delegations from the Indian Prime Minister to the local media—all trying to exhibit their concern, determine the crisis' severity, and assess whether it is "worth getting involved."

This winter I followed the trail of these "starvation deaths" to a community still struggling with hunger and malnourishment long after the hunger crisis began and ended for the frantic outsiders who came to "assess the situation." Vulnerability to crisis remains a long-term dilemma for this community despite that "development" has been the Government of Orissa's official *raison d'être* and that the state enjoys the full-time assistance of five UN development agencies,[1] several national and international NGOs, the World Bank, DFID, and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Kashipur Block also has been embroiled in development work including over 40 years of government watershed projects,[2] 21 years of service from a local NGO, plus multi-million dollar development projects administered by IFAD and UNICEF. My goal was to understand how all this "assistance" had not led measurably towards "development."

Familiar attempts to resolve that timeless conundrum coalesce on three explanations: the society, government, or "vested interests" somehow complicated the "implementation" of the development work. There are two important conceptual problems with focusing only on the *failure* of development interventions, however. Firstly, much empirical evidence reveals that despite often "failing" on their own terms,

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[1] The UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, and WFP.
[2] Senapati & Sahu (1966: 448-9).

development interventions certainly *succeed* in producing something—for example, altered social relations or attitudes, redistributed power, or realigned state-society relations.[3] Secondly, focussing on "what went wrong" often limits analysis to implementation-related catchphrases, such as "social capital," "public action," "political will," or "vested interests."[4] This stale approach to assessing why development interventions often operate according to an unintended script hinders a potentially more useful analysis of whether the interventions themselves are based upon untenable assumptions about the context of their operation.

Utilising this method, Ferguson maintained that the unintended consequences produced by development interventions are rooted in false assumptions that simplify political processes and decontextualise how power and politics are exercised within specific communities—results of what Ferguson has termed "the anti-politics machine" of development. This dissertation intends to revisit Ferguson's insights, expand on them in part, and assert a more pragmatic approach to explaining the exercise of power in political communities—an assertion with critical policy implications. Specifically, this dissertation is concerned with: (1) uncovering the assumptions about the exercise of power that belie the depoliticization of development interventions; (2) analysing the causal relationship connecting these assumptions to the production of unintended consequences for local communities; and (3) proposing how power can be more accurately understood in a way that can mitigate the likelihood of unintended effects of development interventions.

The first section of this dissertation is concerned with political theory. Firstly, I will examine Ferguson's discussion of unintended consequences from development and relief interventions, and I will expand upon Ferguson's insights by identifying the root of

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[3] Ferguson (1994: 18-21, 254-6); and Schaffer (1984: 189).
[4] Additionally, this approach allows intervention planners to divert responsibility for failure to development implementers (Clay & Schaffer, 1984: 2-3).

these false assumptions as the lingering of a Weberian tradition that pervades conventional wisdom of state-society relations and affects development interventions especially through linear public policy models. I will then discuss Migdal's challenge to the Weberian state and his "state-in-society" model of political power.

In the second section, I will analyze these competing theories within the context of three case studies drawn from my field-research of development and relief work within Kashipur Block of Orissa, India. My intention is not to simply tell the "story" of development and relief in this local community, but rather to identify a way to understand it differently than how we have before in terms of an identification of informal networks of power and the fragmentation of social control. This, I hope, will reveal not just what is happening in Kashipur, but also a much broader set of puzzles about why planned development produces mostly unintended effects at the local level. In the final section, I will address the policy implications for incorporating into interventions more accurate assumptions about the exercise of power in political communities.

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Part 2: Theory

Unintended Consequences & State-Society Relations

"The development discourse defined a perceptual field structured by grids of observation, modes of inquiry and registration of problems, and forms of intervention; in short, it brought into existence a space defined not so much by the ensemble of objects with which it dealt but by a set of relations and a discursive practice that systematically produced interrelated objects, concepts, theories, strategies, and the like."

- Arturo Escobar, 1995: 42

Conventional development thinking has evolved through several conventional wisdoms beginning with modernization theory and culminating in today's adherence to a jumble of neo-liberalism, neo-institutionalism, and post-structuralism.[5] Interestingly, despite detours through quite different theoretical constructions, *conventional* development thinking has never departed far from its roots in the "positivist orthodoxy" of the 1950s: the goal of development is chiefly an ahistorical conception of progress, achieved through the implementation of a technical plan by or with the assistance of benevolent state institutions.[6] Myrdal levelled one of the early assaults against this construction, arguing for the inclusion of political and social factors in what was (and in many ways still is) a field dominated by economists.[7] As Myrdal noted:

> The basic principle in the ideology of economic planning is that the state shall take an active, indeed the decisive, role in the economy: by its own acts of investment and enterprise, and by its various controls— inducements and restrictions—over the private sector, the state shall initiate, spur, and steer economic development.…The whole complex ideology of planning, in all its manifestations, is thus essentially rationalist in approach and interventionist in conclusions.[8]

Development planning, according to Myrdal, became its own self-justifying end, driven by the self-rationalizing yearning of government's intervention into economic and social life.[9] Underlying this faith in planning is a dismissal of the idea that underdeveloped communities could develop naturally or are impeded in this pursuit by deeper cultural or political issues—instead, development is seen to be a manageable "process" or "outcome" requiring technical inputs, institutional rearrangements, or

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[5] Leys (1996: 26).
[6] Leys (1996: 7-8).
[7] Myrdal (1968: 28).
[8] Myrdal (1968: 709).
[9] Myrdal (1968: 714, 739).

societal enhancement. Such assumptions are problematic in their simplicity and can have serious implications for intended beneficiaries.

Ferguson reveals that false (especially, apolitical) assumptions belying development interventions produce unintended consequences for recipient communities. However, despite widespread agreement that nearly all development projects in Lesotho fail to produce their intended effects, he argues, the development community continues to justify more interventions in terms of the same erroneous assumptions about the country that had led previous plans to disaster. Ferguson explains that this lemming-like behaviour results from an institutional logic that supports interpretations of development problems that justify an institution's own assistance. In other words, because development agencies "are not in the business of promoting political realignments or supporting revolutionary struggles," development planning by these agencies necessarily avoids such issues.[10] Political and social knowledge is used by development agencies, thus, only when they deem such knowledge as useful.

A drawback to this conceptual tautology is that it unnecessarily precludes consideration of how to overcome such shortcomings. Indeed, Ferguson admits that he has criticised development "without providing any sort of prescription or general guide for action."[11] His analysis explains why development discourse tends to be erroneous (the anti-politics machine of institutional logic depoliticizes interventions) without probing at the more interesting question of what assumptions underlie such depoliticized interventions. The latter approach can help identify where development planning tends to "go wrong" and what specific assumptions must be discarded for more effective interventions.

Indeed, Ferguson touches upon the two most common assumptions integrated into development planning that seem to trigger their depoliticization: the principle of

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[10] Ferguson (1994: 69).
[11] Ferguson (1994: 279).

"governmentality" and faith in linear (i.e. technical) planning. Whereas the former assumes that "the main features of economy and society [are] within the control of a neutral, unitary, and effective national government, and thus responsive to planners' blueprints,"[12] the latter dictates a "blueprint approach" to understanding public policy as a series of linear inputs leading toward certain quantifiable outputs.[13] Ferguson, however, suggests that these assumptions are *products* of development discourse's depoliticising tendency, but it seems that these assumptions are the *reason* for erroneous development discourse in the first place. In other words, these apolitical assumptions are the *cause* for poor development plans, not the *result* of the development planning itself.

This point of departure with Ferguson's writing is rooted partly in a different application of Foucault's discussion of power. Foucault warned against focusing on power's "central locations" (e.g. a state government), but rather, analysis "should be concerned with power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions."[14] One can operationalise this insight without utilising the generally unworkable Foucaultian application of "decentred" or "subjectless" power, which conceptualises actors as merely *vehicles* through which some autonomous body of power acts.[15] Ferguson is so tempted by Foucault's "power of discourse" analysis, however, that he overlooks more meaningful attention to what elements within that discourse cause development interventions to produce unintended consequences. By transcending this unnecessary cynicism concerning the institutional motivations and ideological limitations of development agencies, one can construct a more progressive critique of development discourse that aspires to improve how interventions are formulated and operate.

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[12] Ferguson (1994: 72).
[13] Hyden (1983: 65).
[14] Foucault (1976: 96).
[15] See Sangren (1995) for a fuller critique of Foucault's decentred power approach.

The German political theorist, Max Weber, has appeared most overtly in development theory through his widely cited writing concerning the cultural determinants of capitalist success.[16] He has dominated development theory and planning more clandestinely, however, through his description of the state "as an autonomous organization with extraordinary means to dominate."[17] He asserted that the state is "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical* force within a given territory."[18] This construction of a dominant, omnipotent state has had far-reaching influence over common assumptions regarding how power is exercised within political communities. Although Migdal and others have noted that Weber's emphasis on *legitimate* force indicates his reference to an idealized model—that is, Weber understood the autonomous exercise of power as the *ideal* and not the *norm*[19]—nonetheless, it is the latter view that has burdened development planning with mistaken assumptions about political power. Thus, to accommodate the reality of how states actually operate, the literature refers to their distance from the ideal: states could be failed, captured, anarchic, anaemic, aborted, shadow, soft, predatory, and so forth.[20]

This (mis)use of Weber's ideal state has evolved into two approaches to understanding state power: *organic* and *configurational*.[21] The first approach assumes the state to be the pre-eminent actor in society, largely determining the interactions of other social actors. This "statist" approach is applied by Tilly, Olson, and Evans—who assume that states can remain relatively autonomous from their societies.[22] The second approach

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[16] Weber (1992), *The Spirit of Capitalism and the Protestant Ethic.*
[17] Migdal (2001: 8). Migdal refers to Weber's dominance of the social sciences in general, but the same observation applies to the development field more specifically.
[18] Qtd. from Migdal (2001: 13).
[19] Migdal (2001: 14); Weisskopf (1948: 348-9); Schweitzer (1970: 1207).
[20] Migdal (2001: 15).
[21] Chazan *et al.* (1999: 40-41).
[22] See, for example: Tilly (1985); Olson (2000a & 2000b); Evans (1995).

views the state as central to defining the dominant script of social action without necessarily being its principal actor—a view espoused by Khan, Bates, Shils, and Sen.[23] What is important to realize from these examples is that development theory tends to conceptualize a central and dominant role for the state. In fact, this inclination is even stronger today following the mid-1980s movement to "bring the state back in" to development theory, which has been complemented by the 1990s writing that attributes East Asian growth primarily to "developmental" state systems. Indeed, the image one has after reading the World Bank's The East Asian Miracle or Wade's Governing the Market, is that of an omnipotent and omnipresent state, smoothly steering a society towards "development," powered by the twin engines of "policy reforms" and "market intervention."[24] Today, it has become difficult to avoid discussing the central importance of the state and government elites for determining a society's development.

This tendency correlates with a widespread "blueprint approach" to public policy that understands planning as a series of linear inputs leading to intended outcomes. Unsurprisingly, Hyden observed, development plans are typically given more credence by donors than by host governments:

> The former tend to read development plans as they would read plans produced in their home countries without often acknowledging the differences in social and economic circumstances and the fact that that role of planning therefore is not the same.[25]

This linear and apolitical application of policy prescriptions is evident throughout the literature. For the World Bank, for instance, "promoting opportunity" means "encouraging effective private investment," "building the assets of poor people," and "getting infrastructure and knowledge to poor areas."[26] For the OECD, "making aid work better" requires "committing more resources" and increasing coordination between

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[23] See, for example: Khan (2000); Bates (2001); Shils (1975); Sen (1999).
[24] World Bank (1993); and Wade (1990).
[25] Hyden (1983: 65).
[26] World Bank (2001 8-9).

development agencies.[27]   And even Sen, while trouncing simplistic assumptions about poverty and hunger, often leaves unaddressed the practical obstacles to implementing his insights.[28]

What is evident in these examples is a resistance to engage in deeper political analysis regarding reasons why such policies may not produce their intended results. The ultimate consequence of such decontextualised assumptions about policy planning is the blueprint approach's linear policy formation model that follows linear, scientific method-like steps, as illustrated in Figure 4 below:

Recognising and Defining the Problem to be Addressed
↓
Identifying Possible Policy Solutions
↓
Assessing the Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of the Alternative Policy Choices
↓
Choosing the Policy Option that Best Fits the Desired Solution
↓
Implementing the Policy
↓
Possibly Evaluating the Outcome
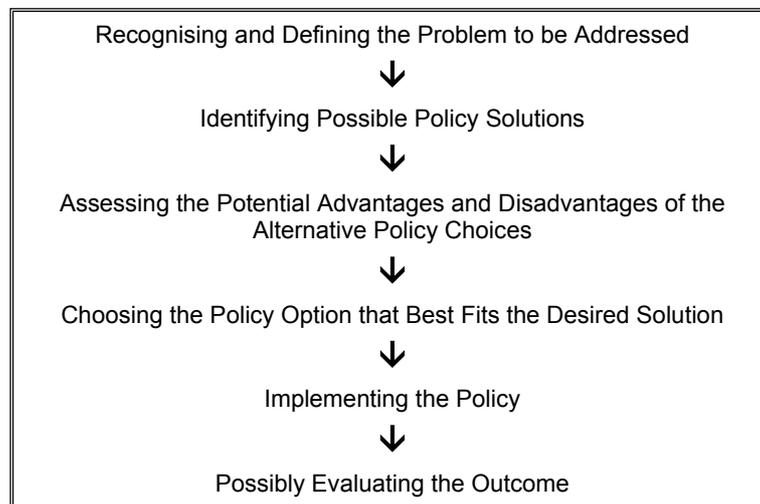
Figure 3: The Linear Policy Formation Model

Source: Sutton (1999: 9); see also Clay & Shaffer (1984: 4)

The linear model reduces policy planning to a technical exercise in problem solving.[29] Implicit in this model, also, are the hazards of what Scott calls "high-modernist ideology"—that is, an aggressive reliance on scientific and technical progress to satisfy human needs, upgrade livelihoods, and resolve social dilemmas.[30] By applying the scientific method to development planning, there has been a concomitant downgrading of complex political and social issues to that which can be technically addressed—often

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[27] DAC (1996: 15-7).
[28] Corbridge (2001).
[29] Sutton (1999: 9 & 42).
[30] Scott (1998: 4, 89-90).

reducing underdeveloped countries or areas to empirical objects rather than as complex political environments with shifting dynamics of power, as we would describe Western countries and societies.[31] The state is recast simultaneously as a technical instrument for mechanically implementing development plans and as a dominant actor able to implement plans as conceived.

What is most problematic with this ideal-linear model is that it divorces policy from the realm of politics. When combined with the principle of governmentality, linear policy formation greatly misconstrues the nature of political power and the political environment in which development interventions must operate. This exposes local communities to inappropriate policies that are vulnerable to manipulation by the real holders of power, which are often not the falsely idealized state bureaucrats and institutions. Such decontextualised interventions inevitably operate according to an unintended script, thus yielding inadvertent outcomes.

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[31] Mitchell (1995: 146).

Migdal has developed a state-society model that challenges the prevalent Weberian model, avoids the conceptual snares that generate depoliticized development planning, and focuses the study of political power on how it is exercised in real, not idealized, communities. Migdal's model is the culmination of a slow recognition in the academic literature that state governments do not operate as ideal monopolies of domination within their societies. Coplan, for instance, reveals that the government of Lesotho cannot control even transborder flows to and from its only neighbour.[32] Huntington argued that Weberian autonomous states are unstable in modernising societies because newly mobilised groups challenge centralized control.[33] Scott and Tripp explain that a citizenry actively challenges state control through "hidden" non-compliance with state authority.[34]

A common theme of these challenges to the ideal state is that Weber's rational-legal and traditional sources of authority are not the sources of state legitimacy from the perspective of the "subaltern,"[35] and thus, we must shed our assumptions about the exercise of political power from the "deep-seated elitism" and conceptual simplicity by which it is now so burdened.[36] Migdal accepts this challenge and offers his "state-in-society" approach that has two essential components relevant for development theory: (1) that social control and political power derive from the ability to augment social welfare; and (2) that because this augmentation is not monopolised by any one source, social control and political power exist fragmented amongst "a melange" of competing and cooperating power brokers.

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[32] Coplan (2001).
[33] Huntington (1968: 177-191).
[34] Scott (1985); and Tripp (1997).
[35] Guha (1981: 35-6).
[36] Gupta (1989: 796).

The first component is similar to Scott's assertion that peasants are concerned primarily with sustaining their livelihoods, and thus, legitimate authority depends on a patron's ability to augment that group's welfare.[37] As one organization that competes to provide such resources, a state may standout in society without being its dominant actor. Thus, it is possible to make sense of the enormous degree of informal economic activity that MacGaffey describes in the former Zaire.[38] Non-compliance with state authority is not just corruption or criminality, but rather, a more important struggle over authority to make rules that determine social behaviour: "these struggles are over whether the state will be able to displace or harness other organizations—families, clans, multinational corporations, domestic enterprises, tribes, patron-client dyads—which make rules against the wishes and goals of state leaders."[39]

The second component—that states exist within "a melange" of other social organizations that compete for social control—indicates that, from the perspective of the subaltern, there may be many managers of power that complicate the observation of how social control is exercised. Migdal identities an accommodation of power between politicians, the "implementers" of state goals, and local strongmen formally outside of the state, which ensures against the monopolisation of power by any formal or informal power brokers.[40]

Additionally, competing interests influence the behaviour of individual actors. Whereas institutional theory tends to characterise bureaucratic behaviour according to models assuming "representative" or "average" bureaucrats, in the final analysis, implementers remain individuals, even when organised within large bureaucracies,[41] and thus, analysis must account for the *individual* not *theoretical* pressures and incentives that

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[37] Scott (1976: 180-5).
[38] MacGaffey (1991).
[39] Migdal (1988: 31).
[40] Migdal (2001: 90). For similar observations, see: Heeger (1974: 49-50); Moe (1995); and Grindle (1980).
[41] Buchanan (1965: 7).

bureaucrats face in local contexts. Migdal argues that the government's local "implementers" are strategically sandwiched between institutional policymakers and society,[42] and thus, they confront four sources of professional pressure that affect their behaviour (to which we could add an implementer's personal affairs and character), including: (1) one's formal supervisors; (2) the intended clients/beneficiaries of the implemented programme; (3) regional state actors (e.g. peer politicians and bureaucrats); and (4) non-state local strongmen (e.g. moneylenders, landlords, and local businesspersons),[43] as illustrated below.

Figure 3: The Competing Interests of Government Implementers

Source: Adopted from Migdal (2001: 85); Grindle (1980: 10-13); and own observations

An implementer accommodates these competing pressures in addition to (or as part of) his/her professional obligations, and thus, implementation may not progress according to the intended design.[44] Inevitably, this system of accommodation—at both the societal and individual levels—determines how state resources and goals affect local

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[42] Migdal (2001: 84-5).

[43] Migdal (2001: 85).

[44] For the relationship between distributional conflict and policy implementation, see Rodrik (1988) & Grindle (1980).

communities.[45] Policies and plans that ignore such dynamics are naturally susceptible to producing unintended effects.

This section argued that development interventions tend to produce unintended consequences for recipient communities due to the incorporation of mistaken assumptions regarding how politics is exercised in local contexts. By building on Ferguson's insights, this section has identified the source of these false assumptions to be the widespread adherence to Weberian ideal state models, which depoliticizes the real context of social control and political authority in local communities. It is within the environment of fragmented power, which Migdal describes in his state-in-society approach, that one can understand how informal and non-state channels of power lead development interventions to produce unintended consequences. The next section will apply this theoretical discussion to three case studies taken from field-research in a relatively small community of rural India.

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[45] Migdal (1988: 247-8).

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Part 3: Application

Interventions & Consequences in Kashipur Block

"There's no success like failure, and failure's no success at all."

- Bob Dylan, *Love Minus Zero, No Limit* (1965)

The media and government attention to Kashipur's "starvation deaths" during the summer of 2001 has made Kashipur a national symbol for rural poverty in India.[46] Despite Kashipur's manifest poverty, life there has changed noticeably since Indian independence. An administrative unit since at least 1573,[47] nearly 400 years later, Kashipur still had no town but only clusters of small villages overwhelmingly inhabited by "scheduled tribes"—that is, the most marginalized group of India's social totem pole.[48] Whereas the old district gazette may have been accurate in declaring that "the entire Kashipur tahsil…is a wild country, a tangle of hills and valleys with a few patches of cultivable land,"[49] today, in partial contrast, there are two or three market "towns," 414 villages, an increasing proportion of "general caste" and "scheduled caste" inhabitants, a local NGO's headquarters, and a considerably improved transportation infrastructure and local governance institutions better connecting Kashipur to neighbouring blocks, districts, and the state and national governments.

This section describes three episodes of development and relief work in Kashipur to illustrate how apolitical and decontextualised assumptions about the exercise of power have produced unintended consequences for this local community. The first case-study describes how an IFAD-sponsored rural infrastructure programme in Kashipur allowed a moneylender to consolidate his control in the area and upset government social control. The second case-study describes how a power struggle between a state-sponsored mining initiative and a local NGO weakened the NGO's social programmes and generated

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[46] Many contest whether the deaths were hunger-related or actual starvation. This distinction is more politically than academically relevant. The more important issue that concerns this paper is long-term food insecurity and its political causes.
[47] Senapati & Sahu (1966: 442).
[48] Senapati & Sahu (1966: 3, 446).
[49] Senapati & Sahu (1966: 8).

inconclusive land alienation for several tribal villages. The third case-study describes the

politics of the recent "relief" efforts following the summer "starvation deaths" crisis.

"I am a man who understands the problems of the people." I smiled, reassuring Mr. Singh of my pretend ignorance.[50] Satisfied with my response, he turned and continued to duck past low-hanging tree branches while we snaked through his mango fields. He stopped again. "You know, the government has it all wrong. These people need agricultural education so that they can plant mango fields like these, and they need bauxite mining to get wage labour." I swatted flies off my sweat-beaded brow, smiled again, and continued to follow the most powerful man in Kashipur Block alone through his fields.

By 1998, Kashipur Block had received over a decade of international aid amounting to USD 24.4 million through the IFAD and WFP supported Orissa Tribal Development Project (OTDP).[51] According to the OTDP Evaluation Report, the project's objective "was to achieve a sustainable economic uplift of the tribal population with a spread of benefits that would reach the weaker and most disadvantaged section of the community."[52] However, the intervention was formulated in ignorance of the central importance of informal power structures in the local community, and these structures ensured that good intentions would be manipulated and ultimately self-defeating.[53]

Unintended Consequences

Mr. Singh was one of several moneylenders operating in Kashipur Block before the IFAD project began. Moneylenders operate by extending generous loans to the most disadvantaged tribals during festivals and during poor harvest years, using tribal land and

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[50] At my discretion, I will not use "Mr. Singh's" real name.

[51] IFAD (1998: 2).

[52] IFAD (1998: 2).

[53] I refer to "informal power" brokers and structures as an indication that power and authority exists outside of formal government hierarchies. This can include formal government leaders acting in an unofficial capacity. My central argument is that power and influence are not exercised necessarily according to formal (i.e. "rational-legal" or "traditional") channels.

future harvests as collateral for short-term loan repayments plus extortionate interest rates. This is neither a new practice—it is noted in Kashipur by the 1966 District Gazetteer[54]—nor is this practice condoned officially by the government—in fact, informal moneylending is illegal in Orissa. But widespread informal patronage—what was repeatedly described to me as "Orissa's most open secret"—ensures the protection of local power bosses by well-connected politicians and government administrators.[55]

Owning a small cement supply business, Mr. Singh was in a unique position to capitalize on the very infrastructure-heavy OTDP as its major supplier. Although several other local elites extracted their own cuts from the OTDP funds, Mr. Singh was able to further manipulate the project for consolidating his local dominance. By the time I met him in his mango fields, he was allegedly the sole moneylender for all 414 villages in Kashipur, and local NGO workers estimated that he operates actively in at least 200 to 250 villages.[56] Ignorance of such informal patterns of social control had led IFAD to fund the empowerment of a local strongman who would create future problems for Kashipur's development.

Another factor contributing to Mr. Singh's consolidation and continued maintenance of power was that OTDP had inadvertently created a local dependence on wage labour that could not be continued consistently by the government. According to the evaluation report:

> The tribals were provided both with food-for-work and a token salary in return for their labour in developing project-related infrastructure. However, once infrastructure activities were completed, employment opportunities were absent, thus leaving the tribals without the cash-in-hand they had received through OTDP. *Having got used to cash-in-hand, the tribals have been forced to revert again to moneylenders, which has only aggravated their indebtedness problem.*[57]

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54 Senapati & Sahu (1966: 449).
55 See also: Stackhouse (2000: 236-50).
56 "Author" (2001: *Agragamee Anonymous*).
57 IFAD (1998: 4, emphasis added).

The good intentions of OTDP—employing locals in food-for-work projects—had raised expectations on an already cash-strapped government for more public employment. This has produced two consequences: (1) it has led the government to stretch resources intended for relief-related food-for-work programmes, using them instead as long-term government answers to enduring food insecurity; and (2) several state government leaders notice an IFAD-inspired cultural shift from self-organized tribal coping strategies to lasting dependency on handouts and government-provided work. While interviewing in tribal villages with a government translator, in fact, I observed several cases where the government official was petitioned by tribals for more public employment—an appeal unprecedented before the OTDP. Increasingly, employment generation schemes are used as political manoeuvres to defuse political crises triggered by "starvation deaths" reports, like during the summer of 2001 in Kashipur. This erratic use of food-for-work and alleged difficulties in delivering full payments to participants has inadvertently led people to seek more stable supply lines outside of the government hierarchy. Thus, the OTDP has contributed indirectly to a ready demand for Mr. Singh's services in the absence of state capacity to meet the tribals' altered household security measures.

False Assumptions

It is clear from the aftermath of the OTDP, that the project was ignorant initially of the informal elites who were positioning themselves for access to the project funds. Despite a commitment to monitoring and evaluation, project management was weak and inconsistent in practice. The Evaluation Report indicates that OTDP had twelve project managers in nine years, "which obviously prevented a minimum degree of continuity….this was insufficient to build relationships with all concerned, and to gain

the confidence of the target group."[58]   Most problematically, an OTDP mid-term evaluation report indicated that only 35-percent of OTDP personnel were "fully aware" of project objectives and only 50-percent were "partly aware," indicating a compartmentalization of project coordination.[59]

It is not surprising, therefore, that there was no real feedback into the planning cycle to account for unforeseen circumstances—ensuring that for most of the project cycle, the intervention operated decontextualised from its original formulation. Thus, when the local NGO abandoned its implementation of the human development component of an otherwise infrastructure-heavy development programme, IFAD was unable to find a replacement, and human development projects depreciated midway through the project cycle.[60]   According to IFAD, the NGO's pullout resulted from a "power struggle" over the NGO's alleged misuse of project funds to promote its own political agenda.[61]   Without better accounting for Kashipur's political environment, OTDP officials suffered (and local power bosses benefited) from a rotating line-up of project managers who were evidently ignorant of how funds could be (and were) easily manipulated to serve ulterior, political objectives.

Interestingly, IFAD has just proposed a *second* development programme in Kashipur (among other blocks) that seems likely to reproduce the *same* consequences as the first programme. Although there is greater focus on "participation" and on undertaking more social-oriented goals (e.g. a legal defence fund to pursue land alienation cases),[62] the programme design does not account for the existence of local strongmen who will undoubtedly manoeuvre to manipulate project funds. For instance, IFAD intends to devolve implementing authority to village assemblies—institutions in which

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58 IFAD (1998: 4).
59 IMEC (1993: 136-8).
60 IFAD (1998: 4)
61 IFAD (1998: 4)
62 IFAD. (2002: 5).

Mr. Singh likely places his clients.[63] Thus, IFAD's "participatory approach" may further *enhance* susceptibility to fund diversion. Additionally, in a one-paragraph section dedicated to programme "risks," IFAD recognizes the potential for its intervention to increase dependence on unsustainable welfare schemes, leading the tribals to seek the assistance of moneylenders, eventually reversing IFAD's work to prevent land alienation. This risk is explained to be "mitigated by the inherent desire of tribals to be self-reliant"[64]—a very problematic assumption and an exceptionally weak mitigating "strategy."

Unfortunately, the second IFAD programme has incorporated many of the same false assumptions that led the original OTDP to be self-defeating. This failure to account for Kashipur's political environment, despite a "second chance" to do so, looks likely to lead IFAD to reproduce very costly unintended consequences.

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[63] "Author" (2001: *Block-Level Officers*).
[64] IFAD (2002: 11).

One can sense the tension in Kashipur Town—the headquarters of an increasingly notorious block. Multiple battle lines have been drawn across its one main road, and following the killings by police of three tribals in December 2000, overt conflict has been put on ice, resulting in a potentially explosive cold war. For the moneylender, hostility is aimed at uncooperative block and district government officials and Agragamee—the local NGO and his chief target for enmity. For Agragamee, the real culprits are the mining corporations, supported by power-hungry intermediaries like the moneylender and a callous government bureaucracy. The Block Development Officer (BDO) was new to his position when I arrived but had already been dragged into the conflict—his headquarters was attacked by a welcoming party allegedly conscripted by the moneylender.[65] This conflict is exacerbated by the confines of space—the BDO and the moneylender live across the street from one another and the NGO is up the road.

The ultimate origins of today's conflict in Kashipur can be traced to 1981 when Agragamee was founded as an organization committed to social empowerment in what was considered to be Orissa's most underdeveloped block.[66] Agragamee immediately came into conflict with the landed elites who enjoyed previously unfettered opportunities to exploit the tribal community. Through an agenda that included coupling traditional development projects with "social education," Agragamee increased the local population's awareness of their place in a broader political community of rights, benefits, and threats.

Agragamee slowly increased its power in the tribal area, buttressed by strengthened ties with the government, an expanded scope of operations, and its participation in internationally-funded development projects. Concurrently, however, the NGO's competitors also increased their strength, often bolstered by the same

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[65] "Author" (2001: *Block-Level Officers*).
[66] "Author" (2002: *Achyut Das*).

international development projects and by their own manoeuvring for political patronage. In effect, this was a classic power struggle within the block—it was fundamentally a conflict reflecting fragmented social control with each actor competing for the loyalty of Kashipur's marginalised community. Thus, some villages would accommodate an NGO night-school teacher or grain bank along with a moneylender agent and government welfare schemes. What Taradatt laments as "empire building" by local elites,[67] one of Currie's village respondents refers to similarly as sovereigns "presiding over kingdoms."[68]

These power dynamics would shift dramatically with the government's 1992 decision allowing multinational companies to mine Kashipur's bauxite-rich hill areas. This required acquisitioning tribal land, resettling several villages, and producing potentially devastating pollutants. The companies agreed to provide a windfall of unskilled employment and a longer-term rehabilitation package for those forced to resettle.[69] For chronically hungry communities accustomed to poor cultivation, the prospect of a more stable subsistence was likely very appealing.[70] Thus, Agragamee was thrust into a situation where its growing hegemony was threatened and where its chief rivals, especially the block's moneylender, were central supporters of the mining companies. The conflict thus commenced along predictable fault lines, and both sides manipulated tribal opinion through a polarising presentation of the debate: pro-mining *or* anti-mining—the aftermath of which remains today as many villages are unwilling to discuss this highly divisive issue.[71]

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[67] Taradatt (2001: 115).

[68] Currie (2001: 166-7).

[69] UAIL.

[70] Additionally, Scott argues that peasants will enter into seemingly exploitative arrangements that nonetheless stabilise access to livelihood (1976: 163-5).

[71] Most tribals were manipulated easily by the pro- and anti- movements due to their unfamiliarity with land rights issues and the effects of mining. Both "sides" of the issue exploited this situation. For instance, many of Agragamee's illustrations associate industrial development with death and destitution [Agragamee (1995a: 23; 1995b: 22 & 23; 1996: 22)], and the mining companies allegedly enlisted the support of local elites to help "convince" the tribals to accept the resettlement and rehabilitation package ("Author," 2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*).

Agragamee's director declined an invitation to participate in the government's coordination committee with the mining companies. Without a forum for multilateral dialogue between the "major powers," the conflict began to escalate as Agragamee committed "moral support" to local acts of protest while the local police indirectly assisted the mining companies by arresting "anti-social [i.e. anti-mining] elements." Finally, a series of violent attacks on mining company property precipitated the removal of Agragamee's NGO licence in 1998. Soon after Agragamee re-obtained its license eighteen months later, and following and preceding more vandalism by people associated with both sides of the conflict, police killed three tribals at an anti-mining gathering—an unprecedented incident leaving Orissa shocked.[72]

Unintended Consequences

Following the police firing, the major power brokers are avoiding open conflict while awaiting the results of a judicial inquiry into the incident,[73] but this relative inactivity betrays the consequences of the remaining tension.

For Agragamee, this conflict led to the temporary withdrawal of its license, the long-term damage to its relations with the government, the loss of one of its major international donors, and the abandonment of its mid-professional staff for more attractive jobs elsewhere, away from Kashipur's environment of threat to Agragamee workers.[74] Overall, this situation has weakened Agragamee's basis of political power: social programmes have been reduced, redirected elsewhere, or are being implemented by less qualified local leaders.[75]

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[72] The events that led to the firing are highly contested. I am concerned here only with the actions that created the environment in which such tension existed—from this perspective, the firings were only the natural point of escalation of an avoidable situation.

[73] "Author" (2001: *Biswajit Patnaik*).

[74] Mohapatra & Ramachandran (2000: 23 & 27).

[75] Mohapatra & Ramachandran (2000: 23 & 27); and "Author" (2001: *Manmohan Pradhan*).

For the mining companies, despite a quick beginning to land acquisition in 1995 when 2,865 acres were acquired,[76] the conflict has halted further acquisition, leaving unsettled the status of previous investments and dispersed compensations. Related investments, such as a new international-standards hotel in Rayagada Town, are underutilised due to the less-than-expected traffic of visiting businesspersons.[77]

For Kashipur's local community, many villagers feel exploited by the mining companies and Agragamee and are distrustful of both. Some villages even have armed themselves with "traditional weapons" and stand ready to confront visiting outsiders by force.[78] Additionally, due to Agragamee's temporary suspension and dwindling presence, social programmes on which villagers depended have deteriorated, and the anti-mining movement's key ally has been critically wounded. Furthermore, the partially implemented land acquisition programme has produced a situation where many compensation packages already have been exhausted by tribals prior to their relocation.[79] Thus, the jockeying for social control within Kashipur has left the tribals more vulnerable, more distrustful of outsiders, and more likely to continue their (sometimes violent) protests—exactly opposite the intended aims of the competing local power brokers.

False Assumptions

While choosing the course of their actions to consolidate (or fend off challenges to) their social control, the "major powers" in this conflict had adopted a depoliticized overestimation of their ability to influence the outcome. The government and mining companies, for instance, tried to enlist local support by forming alliances with exactly the local power brokers who were sure to antagonise Agragamee and instigate immediate

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[76] UAIL. (2001: 1); and Pattajoshi (2001: 1).
[77] "Author" (2001: *Biswajit Patnaik*).
[78] Including me!
[79] "Author" (2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*).

distrust from the tribals. This strategy was more focused on coercing the tribals from their land through the employment of already coercive elites than on influencing the tribals through dialogue or a more sensitive project phase-in plan that could account for local fears.

Likewise, Agragamee over-assumed its own dominance in Kashipur and jeopardised its longer-term development programmes in the area through waging, facilitating, or at least not being more transparent regarding its role in a pitched battle with the government on which its existence depended. Currie indicates that Agragamee's leadership understood the paradox of its own survival in Kashipur—the trade-off between survival and autonomy[80]—and thus, it seems that its actions reflect either a single poor calculation or a growing trend of institutional self-confidence associated with its local "empire building." The director's decision to withdraw from the government's coordination committee, for instance, wasted a potentially useful forum for representing an anti-mining perspective to what was an otherwise pro-mining committee with significant decision-making power. Despite the director's intention to signal the organisation's neutrality, his action was perceived as evidence of the NGO's active opposition to the mining initiative, further polarising the conflict.

Furthermore, Agragamee utilised a decontextualised anticipation of how its social empowerment programmes would be perceived by its local competitors, especially after the power dynamics changed with the mining initiative's commencement. In other words, a strategy that may have been effective against the competition of divided and more diffuse local elites may have been naïve to the contextual transformations of its environment, including the consolidation of moneylending power by a single actor and the unification of local elites behind the pro-mining movement. As Huntington observed, the mobilisation or introduction of new actors in political communities

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[80] Currie (2001: 165-6).

decreases the power of other groups, which must respond by "counterorganising" to avoid the need to withdraw.[81] Thus, by remaining strategically static, Agragamee failed to correct what had become decontextualised policies.

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[81] Huntington (1976: 33).

Hunger is a sensitive subject in Indian political discourse—one that has the power to mobilise national sentiment, scandalise a state government, and marshal massive amounts of resources dedicated to "relief." Food insecurity in Orissa has been an issue of particular national notoriety since the "Great Orissa Famine" of 1866 that killed one quarter of the state's population,[82] and the well-publicised "starvation deaths" in Kalahandi District throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The reportage of a hunger-related death in the national daily newspapers often inspires a predictable response cycle, including: screaming headlines exaggerating the number of deaths and their causes; a steady flow of government and development community VIPs visiting the "effected areas"; an outpouring of "emergency relief"; and recriminations against local government workers and state politicians. Indeed, hunger-related death seems more of a political crisis than a nutritional one. The "crisis" subsides once the media attention has exhausted itself or the government has satisfied the public that the "situation" is receiving attention and the guilty punished.[83]

Kashipur Block found itself caught in this "hunger relief cycle" during the summer of 2001. Three villages in particular received nearly exclusive attention despite deaths throughout Kashipur during the same season,[84] perhaps due to the relative accessibility of the villages, which enabled easier access for VIP motorcades and reporters. Although some reports mentioned hunger-related deaths in other districts, nearly complete attention was on Kashipur. Political leaders followed a usual pattern of denying actual starvation, while opposition leaders dismissed those denials by exploiting the sensitivity of the issue—a role-playing ritual performed regardless of the party in

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[82] Currie (2001: 2-3).
[83] See, for instance: Currie (2001: 175-6); or Sainath (1996: 315-370).
[84] Interviews with villagers, see "Works Cited" section.

power.[85] The Indian prime minister held a video conference with "starving villagers," the NHRC demanded a report from the state, and platoons of reporters and government elites were ferried to and from the area by hired cars and helicopters. Soon, the visiting tour groups were attributing nearly every death in the villages to "starvation"—as one reporter would observe, the media seemed to indicate "people stopped dying of natural causes."[86]

The District and Block administration sprung to action with state-allocated funds. Families in the spotlighted villages received food aid, food-for-work employment, and metal cooking utensils. Families that suffered a death received corrugated metal roofs for their homes and cash compensation. The District rushed to fill vacancies in its health services, mobile health units were established, and new development works were pledged. Soon, media attention subsided along with the rapidly mobilised relief efforts.

Unintended Consequences

By the time I visited Kashipur four months after the media frenzy, people were still hungry and malnourished, many were suffering curable ailments from which they were vulnerable to succumb, and all that remained of the gallant "emergency relief" were a few metal roofs blindingly reflecting the hot Indian sun and farcically clashing with the thatched roofs of neighbouring shelters. Life had returned to the normalcy of silent hunger for Kashipur yet the relief efforts' unintended consequences remained.

The immediate consequence of these efforts was that potentially more needy beneficiaries relying on government programmes in other blocks and villages experienced an outflow of government attention and resources while media pressure necessitated

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[85] Currie (2001: 175-203).
[86] "Author" (2001: *Ruben Banerjee*); & Currie (2001: 205).

quick and visible "relief" in Kashipur.[87] Rayagada's Collector was upfront: "there are areas more vulnerable than Kashipur, more deprived, more disadvantaged,... [but] what gets our attention first is not always decided by the priority set out in our plans."[88] Enormous resources were exhausted from the state government's budget to accommodate reporters and visiting dignitaries—the Special Relief Commissioner during that summer estimates that the government spent over Rs-2-million (about USD 40,000) just on providing helicopter service from Bhubaneswar to Kashipur.[89]

There are two longer-term consequences of the staged-managed relief enacted in Kashipur. Firstly, the discourse of "emergency" and "relief" in this context seems to have diverted attention away from the more essential problem of hunger (which is wrongly assumed to have been "relieved") and its fundamental causes in Kashipur (which is assumed simply to have been a drought year).[90] Thus, although people are still hungry in Kashipur and many people have been unable to afford government subsidized rice for months,[91] government "relief" efforts have ceased, yielding to the government's less urgent and less focussed development schemes. For instance, by attributing the hunger deaths to "drought," attention was diverted from the more essential problems that nearly 90-percent of Kashipur's cultivated land remains un-irrigated and nearly all marginal farmers rely on this land for their subsistence.[92] Although this recent media attention offered an opportunity to focus on the more fundamental causes of food insecurity in Kashipur, this opportunity was squandered and relief was used as a political "quick-fix."

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[87] "Author" (2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*).
[88] "Author" (2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*).
[89] "Author" (2002: *H.K. Panda*).
[90] Sainath observed similarly elsewhere in India (1996: 356-7).
[91] Interviews with villagers, see "Works Cited" section.
[92] DRDA, Rayagada. (2002).

Secondly, the politics of relief in Orissa ensure that by the time relief is undertaken, a community has become disempowered and at the final stages of hunger (i.e. visible destitution or starvation). Although some rural people jokingly refer to drought relief as *teesra fasl* (the third crop),[93] there is a complex progression of coping mechanisms that are enacted well before drought relief would be available. The WFP has developed the below illustration of these coping mechanisms as practiced in Orissa:

Look for alternative employment options / Working for long hours or low wage
Borrowing grain/money
Mortgaging of household assets
Sale of utensils
Sale of livestock
Sale of girl child
Mortgaging productive asset
Shift to non-conventional food items
Skipping meals
Starvation
Migration

Commitment of Domestic Resources
Low
High

Time
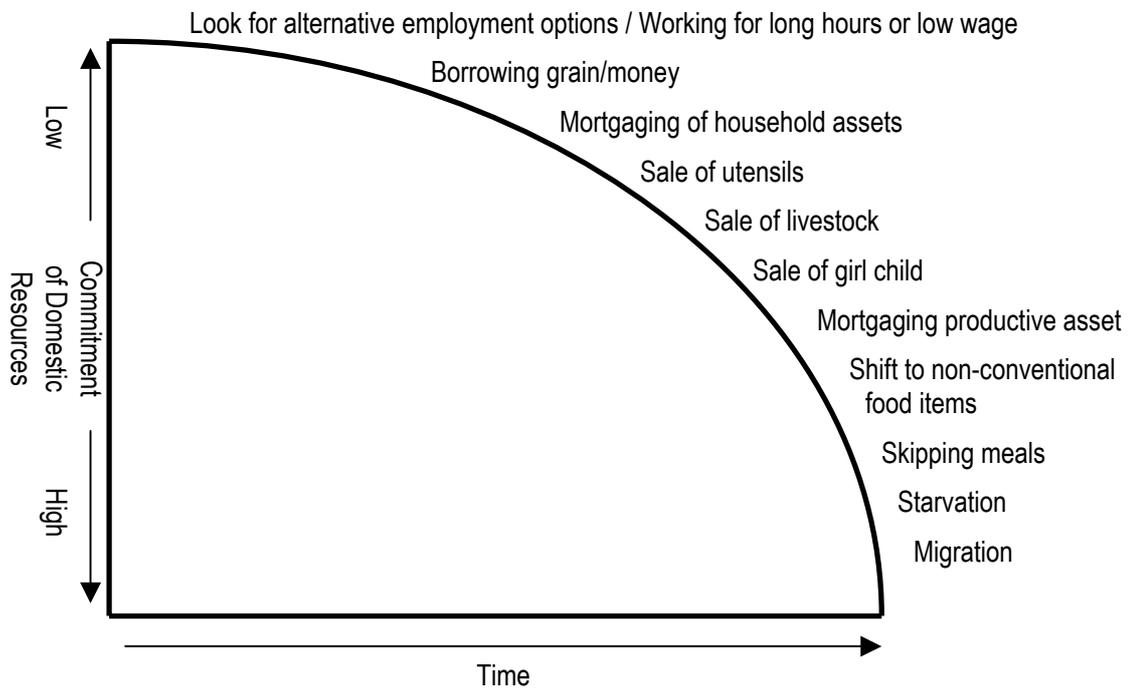
Figure 3: Coping Strategies Practiced by Orissa's Rural Poor

Source: WFP (2000: Chapter 5)

Interventions triggered at the final stages of this coping strategy progression—while problematic for failing to recognise a looming hunger crisis earlier—allow households to become more vulnerable through asset loss. Thus, because hunger relief was only a temporary feeding exercise for Kashipur, people returned to an even more insecure situation once the relief efforts ceased.

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[93] Sainath (1996: 317).

False Assumptions

A familiar pattern of false assumptions has led relief efforts in Kashipur to produce unintended consequences. Firstly, the media, public, and government leaders had assumed a state-centric and short-sighted response to hunger relief. This assumption belies the current context of Orissa relief policy in practice, which understands "relief" as an issue analytically detached from "development"—the latter is the longer-term work between periods when "relief" is needed instead. This conceptualisation is incongruent with local perceptions. Figure 6 reveals that a household manages shocks to food access through an extensive set of active measures. The "victims" of a drought are not passive bystanders to hunger, awaiting state activity to relieve them—they employ their own coping strategies before a food crisis reaches the visible stage at which the media and government perceive a need for relief. Thus, strategies to augment people's own ability to cope with a food crisis before it reaches terminal stages is a more useful form of "relief" than temporary feeding centres whilst people are starving.[94]

Another effect of decontextualising hunger from the perspective of its victims is to assume linearity in response. For instance, conventional perceptions of a hunger crisis in Orissa can be illustrated as follows:

> Drought → Crop Loss → Hunger Crisis → Relief → No Hunger Crisis

Figure 3: Linear Hunger Crisis and Relief Model

This model understands hunger as a "situation" that "occurred" until it was "relieved" by state policy, decontextualising hunger crisis vulnerability from the broader sequence of accumulating challenges to community livelihoods and ability for self-managed

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[94] An excellent example is Agragamee's introduction of self-managed community grain banks. Without state protection of such schemes, however, these efforts remain vulnerable to manipulation by local elites (Das & Das: 133 & 137).

subsistence. Currie, for instance, demonstrates that Western Orissa's food insecurity is a result of several historical power transfers from small farmers to local elites. Expanding on Currie's insights, we can understand Kashipur's hunger vulnerability within the following model:
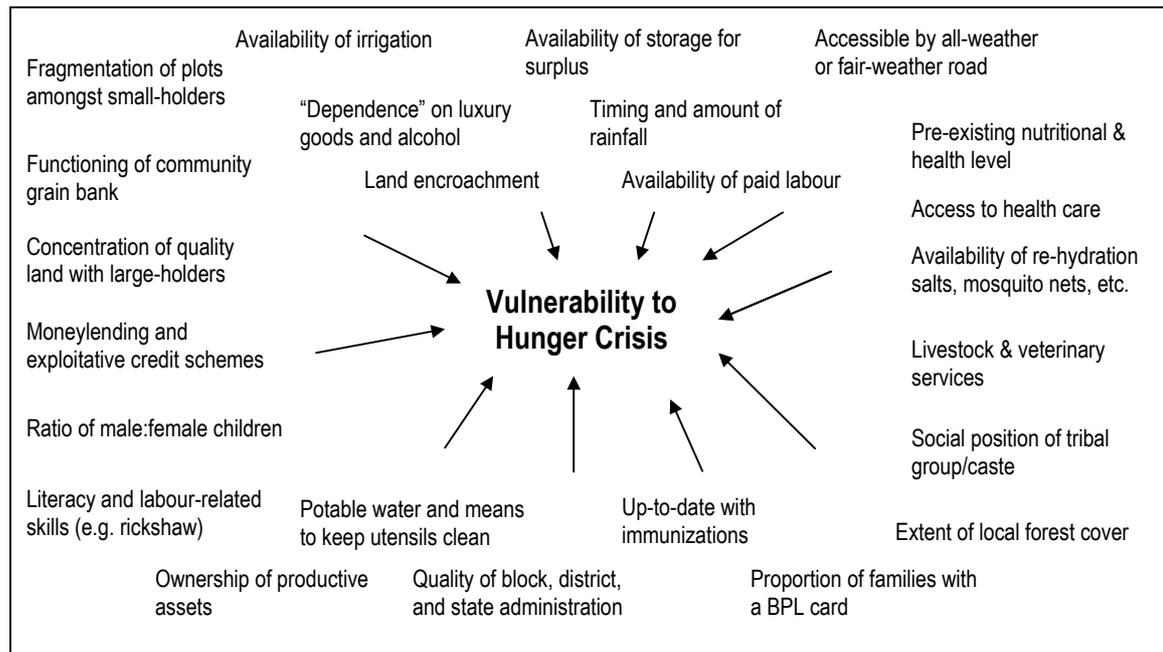
Figure 3: Community Vulnerability to Hunger Crisis

Source: Incorporates insights from Currie (2001: 86-110) with my observations

In this broader model, "relief" in the form of a temporary feeding programme would seem functionally aloof from the inputs to vulnerability, which extend beyond just the loss of entitlement to or availability of food.

Furthermore, policies do not function in a vacuum: they affect people, they are implemented by people, and they are challenged by people. Understanding the role of individuals in the functioning of relief policies is central to understanding why relief policies have unintended effects. Banerjee's analysis of Orissa's relief efforts following the 1999 super-cyclone places individual personalities and actions at the centre of why

relief had divergent implementation records across localities.[95] Similarly, the seeds for Kashipur's hunger-related deaths were planted by a decade of local and district administrators who did not irrigate un-cultivatable tribal farmland, by the moneylender and local contractors who sought to deconstruct community grain banks, and by local NGO leaders who had adopted policies leading to the organisation's 18-month suspension from conducting development work in Kashipur. Now that an effective local and district administration are in place, how can one understand the obstacles to their pre-empting the next situation that will require relief? This will be answered by the concluding section.

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[95] Banerjee (2001).

Part 4: The Model

A Political Approach to Development & Relief

"The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies."

- E.J. Clay & B.B. Schaffer, 1984: 192

The previous section illustrated through three case studies how false assumptions regarding the exercise of power and linear public policy models has produced unintended consequences for Kashipur's community. This paper identified the roots of these false assumptions in the enduring presence within the development community of a Weberian fascination with "ideal-type" political models. Migdal's challenge to this model demonstrates how power exists fragmented throughout society and is contested and accommodated amongst many actors who vie for social control—a model that applies well to understanding Kashipur's politics and how development interventions become depoliticized. However, there has been a general reluctance to apply this more precise understanding of local politics into the literature that informs interventions. In fact, most progress in recognising the importance of informal power has been restricted to the "complex emergencies" literature and has not produced profound changes in the more conventional development or relief literatures.

The first challenge to operationalising a model of diffuse power, therefore, is for those who formulate and implement development interventions to recognise the connections made within this paper between the production of unintended consequences and the apolitical assumptions that often shape interventions. The second challenge is to provide a framework for applying Migdal's insights to formulating interventions. This section addresses the second challenge.

The Model: Learning from Kashipur

If development planners and managers are to account for the fragmented power that exists within political communities, they must incorporate into their interventions the answers to some very unremarkable yet very crucial questions concerning the

interconnections between three factors of the political environment: its patterns of politics, the interventions themselves, and the implementers of those interventions. The consequences of interventions are produced within the ever-shifting space of interactions between the three central nodes of this model, and thus, this model assists in conceptualising the perspectives that must be gauged for understanding how interventions should be fashioned to produce their intended effects.

Politics
· Basis of authority
· Who exercises it
· Relations between
  the dominant actors

Interventions
· Viability/feasibility
· Distributional
  Effects (Perceived)
· Communication

Political Environment

Implementers
· Political Pressures
· Personal Pressures
· Hidden Agendas
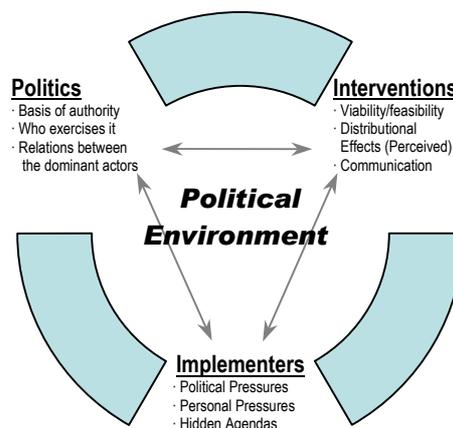
Figure 4: A Broader Political Environment

The usefulness of this model is that it helps to visualise the perspectives from which development planners must gather information to formulate more effective interventions. This should provoke three lines of questioning that can be well answered using conventional research techniques including PRA, surveys, and interviews.

Firstly, one must examine the *politics* of social control:

(1)   From a community's perspective: who exercises social control—that is, from where does legitimacy derive, how is that determined, and who exercises that control?

(2)   From the perspective of different levels of government: who are the important non-government actors, how do they employ government resources, and how does the government rely on them?

(3)   From the perspective of local informal power brokers: what are the means of one's claims to power, how will this intervention challenge or complement those means, and what are possible opportunities to counterorganise against the intervention's aims?

Secondly, one must examine the actual *intervention*:

(1)   What are its fundamental and proximate aims? How are these to be communicated given what one knows of the local context?

(2)   How do the local personal and civic cultures affect the likelihood that the aims can be fulfilled?

(3)   What are the political and social interests of the major power brokers within the intervention area? Will they feel threatened by this project? How could they prevent the programme from working effectively?

Thirdly, one needs to consider the pressures facing the intervention's *implementers*:

(1) What pressures will they confront in this local context, and who is likely to contend for access to their resources?

(2) What personal pressures must they manage in terms of physical threat, living conditions, careerism, or hidden agendas?

(3) How may their behaviour be influenced by these pressures?

The model presented here is a method for eliciting not just *more* but *better* information that can avoid the depoliticization of development interventions—that is,

this is a tool for breaking the "anti-politics machine." Examining the answers to the above three lines of questioning can illuminate a more accurate perception of the patterns of accommodation within a political community and how power is shared and contested by its major power brokers. Underlying these questions is the objective of discerning whether the intended intervention is naïvely ambitious given the pressures and politics within the local context. Kumar and Corbridge, for instance, reveal how some rural development interventions can be successful for improving cultivation but "failures" at simultaneously promoting the empowerment of marginalised farmers—intervention goals must be congruent with the contextual realities on the ground.[96]

To return to Kashipur Block, for instance, the case studies reveal that power is not monopolised by any one particular actor—especially not by the government, which is limited by its inability to supplant the informal power brokers' main source of power: that they augment the local community's survival strategies in a way that the government cannot. For instance, tribals' need for instant cash to finance their traditional festivals, dowries, births, deaths, illness, and other such expenditures ensures that the institution of moneylending will survive despite its illegality and exploitative nature. In fact, Kashipur's dominant moneylender has avoided arrest despite the Collector's several attempts. The local police officers—whose block headquarters is 100-metres up the road from the moneylender's residence—simply ignore the Collector's demands. Their supervisor is likely beholden to one of the moneylender's connections in the state government despite that the Collector is formally the pre-eminent authority within the district.[97]

This pattern of informal patronage protects local strongmen and ensures that the dozens of reform-minded administrators at the district and local level are easily and often transferred away from postings in which they disturb local informal elites. The current

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[96] Kumar & Corbridge (2001); see also: Lancaster (1999).
[97] "Author" (2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*).

Collector of Rayagada and a former Collector of Kalahandi, had both been physically attacked, threatened, harassed, and ultimately transferred from their former postings due primarily to their attempts to deconstruct informal power structures.[98] This environment of physical threat exists for Kashipur's BDO and local NGO workers,[99] and it likely would affect any development or relief implementers who offer an alternative to vested interest domination. In this context of political pressure and physical threat, there are strong pressures to cease challenging the status quo of powerful local strongmen.

Thus, if one were to construct a simple schematic drawing of Kashipur's governance hierarchy, two different pictures would emerge. The first model uses Weber's ideal state, assuming the government to be the pre-eminent institution in Kashipur and informal institutions (e.g. Agragamee, the moneylender, and village elders) to be outside that structure, constantly reacting to the actions of the domineering state. The second model incorporates Migdal's insights of fragmented power into my own findings regarding the channels along which an "informal hierarchy" has emerged.
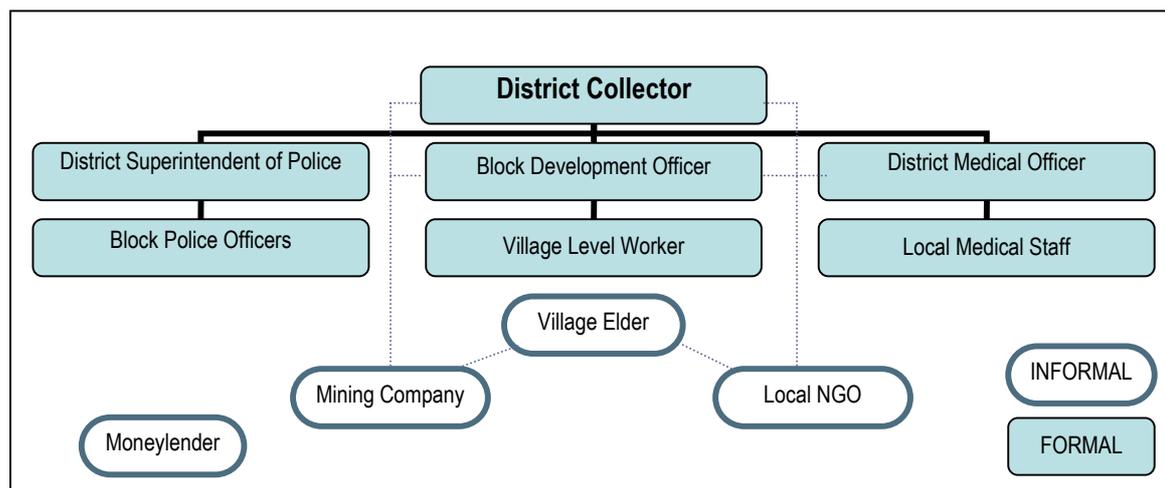
Figure 4: Ideal State Model of Power in Kashipur Block

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[98] "Author" (2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*) & (2001: *P.K. Jena*).
[99] "Author" (2001: *Block-Level Officers*).
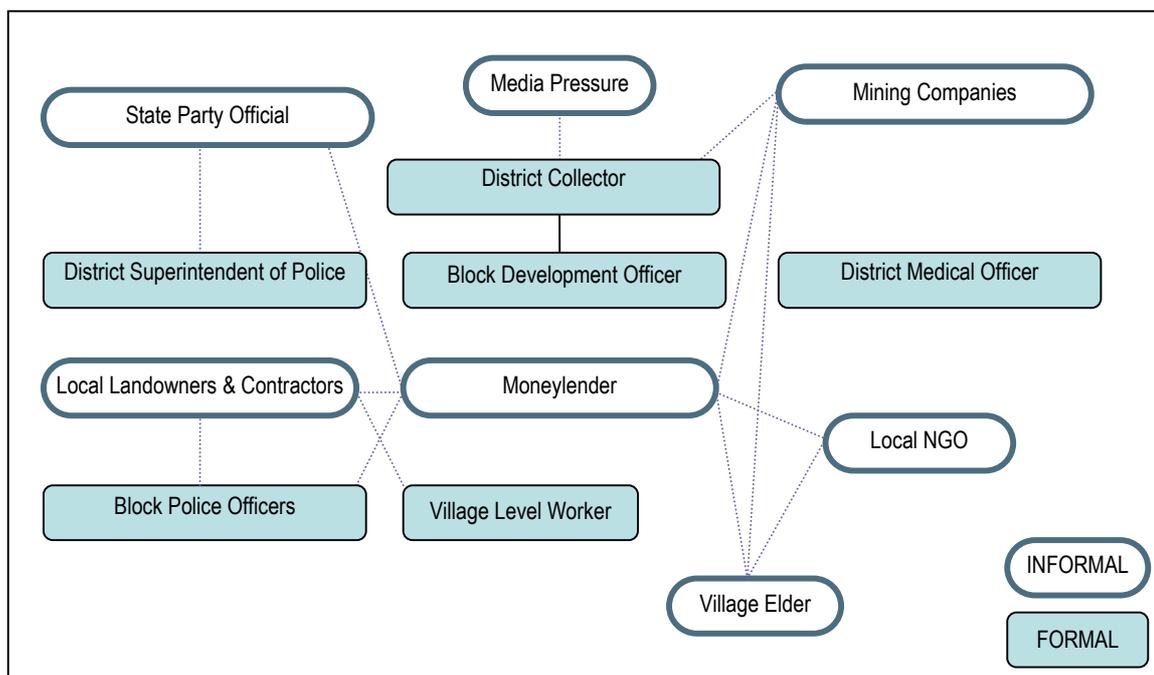
Figure 4: "Informal Hierarchy" of Fragmented Power and Shared Social Control

Whereas the formal hierarchy describes how social control is *supposed* to be exercised, the informal hierarchy explains how it is *actually* exercised. The gulf between the supposed and the actual is the graveyard of good intentions for previous interventions that have inadvertently enriched local strongmen and weakened the local community due to falsely assumed Weberian idealism and apolitical simplicity. Incorporating the dynamics of local power that leads to such unintended effects have considerable policy implications for development and relief.

Firstly, there are no "magic bullets" that can work in all places. This is a deceptively obvious insight—development theory itself is a shifting pattern of adherence to certain "master themes." One year the answer to underdevelopment is technology, then "democracy," then more aid, then free trade, etc. Interventions must "attack poverty" one year but "build institutions for markets" the next. As Rayagada's Collector explained, "there are no easy answers…it's not like if there's an alumina plant then

[Kashipur's residents] will wake up one morning and see they're not poor."[100] Even a seemingly unproblematic commitment to "participation" and "empowerment" ignores the many power divisions within a marginalised community. For instance, although Kashipur is considered a "tribal block," many villages are either non-tribal (they are scheduled or general caste) or have non-tribals living in them.[101] The relationship between caste and economic power is a complicated phenomenon,[102] and this relationship implies that attempts to use blanket participatory methods or to elicit "local knowledge" indiscriminately may be naïve to the divided nature of the locale. Thus, development and relief interventions must be specific to their local context of operations or they will remain decontextualised from the political processes that ultimately determine their consequences.

Secondly, to the extent that "development" is concerned with "progress" for some, one must account for the reaction of others. Migdal has shown that modernisation signals far-reaching processes by which communities experience "concomitant modifications in what people define as their community, where they place their demands, and where they look for authoritative decisions to be made."[103] The contestation of these processes by those who benefit from the status quo means that development is not a "situation" that can "occur," but rather, it is a process that entails accommodation and contestation, fits and spurts, and meaningful changes occurring through the accumulation of small ones. Indeed, most responsibility for post-independence quality-of-life changes in Kashipur is attributable not to massive international aid projects or national development schemes, but rather to a local NGO's education programmes that teach tribals how to exercise their political entitlements. For instance, just twenty years ago, many of Kashipur's tribals were bonded labourers, and

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[100] "Author" (2001: *Bishnucharan Sethi*).
[101] Praxis (2001: 9-23); own observations; and see also: Kumar & Corbridge (2001: 8-9).
[102] For analysis of this relationship, see: Harriss (1982: 214-262); and Praxis (2001: 9-23).
[103] Migdal (1974: 189)

the NGO's efforts eradicated this practice, giving tribals more control over their livelihoods. In contrast, four decades of central and state government watershed projects and a decade of multi-million dollar rural infrastructure projects have left 90-percent of the land unirrigated and many of the roads deteriorating without sufficient maintenance efforts.[104] The success of small projects is not inherent but is likely given the greater tendency for local projects to be rooted in their local context. Focussing on the small changes rather than the grand ones, however, is a major "culture shift" for a development community accustomed to associating daunting challenges with massive interventions (and budgets) to overcome them.[105]

Thirdly, local contexts change and only effective project monitoring can understand these changes. More important than the process of monitoring, however, is an institutional commitment to flexibility and to valuing the results of monitoring processes. For instance, IFAD's Office of Evaluation and Studies (OE) has recently improved its evaluation processes, yet it admits that "to date, no attempt has been made within OE to assess the rate of adoption of the lessons learned and recommendations produced. That is, it is not known how successful OE really is or what kind of impact it is having."[106] A critical challenge, therefore, is to motivate IFAD policymakers and project coordinators to implement the insights gained through monitoring. With a multi-million dollar project proposed to operate within Kashipur again, solving this institutional dilemma is of critical importance for Kashipur's intended beneficiaries.

Ferguson's "anti-politics machine" assumes a degree of inevitability to the depoliticization of development interventions—this process, he argues, underlies the very logic of institutional self-justification. This dissertation, however, has laboured to

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[104] DRDA, Rayagada (2002).
[105] For more on shifting attention from grand schemes/effects to local/gradual ones, see: Stackhouse (2000: 364-7); & Robinson (1988: 46, 251-280).
[106] IFAD (3).

revisit that contention, arguing instead that the tendency to depoliticize development and relief interventions is rooted in specific and identifiable mistaken assumptions about the exercise of local power in political communities. Divorced from their context, these interventions do not function as expected and naturally produce inadvertent consequences for intended beneficiaries. If the development community is to move beyond this monotonous repetition of recycled false assumptions in order to affect the changes it hopes to bring about for local communities, it must incorporate a more accurate understanding of local politics and how the patterns of those politics will determine the consequences of its interventions. This paper has proposed a model for doing so based upon Migdal's "state-in-society" approach and the lessons of Kashipur Block. The burden remains for development planners to operationalise these insights.

The Anti-Politics Machine Revisited

The Accommodation of Power and the Depoliticization of
Development and Relief in Rural India

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I conducted the field-research necessary to produce this dissertation through personal and group interviews conducted in Orissa, India from December 2001 to January 2002. I divided my time between Bhubaneswar, the state capital, and Kashipur and Rayagada Towns. During this time, I conducted 31 personal interviews with local and state government officials, NGO workers and executives, media representatives, moneylenders, and other "local power bosses."

Along with a hired driver and a translator—usually Village Level Workers from the local block office, and on one occasion, two professors from a local college—I conducted 46 group and individual interviews in 20 villages in Kashipur Block chosen to represent a characteristic cross-section of the entire block. My target categories were "media-spotlighted," "inaccessible," and "mining-effected" although readers familiar with the area may note that there are villages that better fit these categories then the villages that I had visited. Additionally, I visited several villages that do not well fit any one category—they were somewhat "random" stops on the way to my target villages.

VILLAGE NAME	GRAM PANCHAYAT	"CATEGORY"	INTERVIEW TYPE	DATE
Panasguda	Kashipur	media-spotlighted	group and individual	24 Dec. 2001
Biamala	Tikiri	media-spotlighted	group and individual	24 Dec. 2001
Jhadiasahi	Tikiri	media-spotlighted	individual	24 Dec. 2001
Renganasil	Dungasil	mining-effected	group and individual	25 Dec. 2001
Doraguda	Kucheipadar	mining-effected	group	25 Dec. 2001
Barighola	Kucheipadar	mining-effected	group	25 Dec. 2001
Kucheipadar	Kucheipadar	mining-effected	group	25 Dec. 2001
Mundagam	Poda Padi	mining-effected	group	26 Dec. 2001
Sanmatikona	Poda Padi	"inaccessible"	group and individual	26 Dec. 2001
Bankumbo	Bankumbo	mining-effected	individual	26 Dec. 2001
Chandagiri	Chandagiri	"random"	individual	27 Dec. 2001
Bhambarjodi	Chandagiri	"random"	group	27 Dec. 2001
Talodandabad	Chandagiri	"random"	individual	27 Dec. 2001
Maligam	Chandagiri	"inaccessible"	individual	27 Dec. 2001
Khumbharsila	Kashipur	cottage industries	individual	28 Dec. 2001
Sankardadungasil	Sankarada	"inaccessible"	group	28 Dec. 2001
Kadanipai	Sankarada	"random"	group (just women)	28 Dec. 2001
Podakona Camp	Sankarada	"inaccessible" *	group and individual	28 Dec. 2001
Nisikhal	Sankarada	"inaccessible" *	group and individual	28 Dec. 2001
Kashipur	Kashipur	block headquarters	individual	23-28 Dec. 2001

Figure 5: Village Interviews, Kashipur Block

My research also allowed me to accumulate a vast amount of first-hand and second-hand printed material: 42-kilograms of government documents, NGO internal and public reports, government statistics, maps, dissertations, termite-eaten district gazetteers, police warrants, memos, and personal faxes.

As with most field-research, I found that I had gathered more information than what I could directly cite within the confines of this paper. This necessitates two comments: firstly, the ideas developed in this dissertation are a product of my analysis of these inputs, many of which I have not been able to address or examine on these pages specifically; and secondly, I have included in this paper less than what I have excluded in terms of the "story" of Kashipur's politics. Although addressing that story in its entirety would require a quite substantial undertaking, I am confident that my selectivity has isolated the most central components of Kashipur's politics, while illustrating precisely that no perspective or input should exist decontextualised from the broader space of interactions within the political environment.

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* The label "inaccessible" must be qualified for these two villages—although they are accessible by what may marginally qualify as a road, the villagers claim that they are "forgotten" by the government and have not received any basic services or attention since the local mine closed there six years ago. Their claims seem plausible given the shocking number of villagers afflicted by several serious illnesses and diseases and the source of their livelihood (they have given up trying to farm the uncultivatable land and barter dried fish for food with inner-pocket tribal villages).

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